

# Distance Learning Pedagogy and Learners' Motivation in Distance Education (DE) in the University of Buea

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated distance learning pedagogy and its effects on learners' motivation in distance education (DE) in the University of Buea. The specific objectives of the study were to: (1) explore how face-to-face tutorials influence learners' motivation in distance learning, (2) find out how independent learning influence learners' motivation in distance learning, (3) examine how group learning influence learners' motivation in distance learning and (4) examine how instructional materials influence learners' motivation in distance learning. The study employed the case study survey research design to answer these research questions. The target population of the study was 128 students. The accessible population was made up of all the 62 distance learners (both current and former) resident in Buea. The sample of the study consisted of 15 students (ten current students and five former distance learners), selected using both the purposive and convenient sampling techniques. Data were collected using both interview schedule and focus group discussion schedule and the validity and reliability of the instrument was established using a system called trustworthiness. Data collected from the field were analysed using the process of thematic analysis whereby concepts or ideas were grouped under umbrella terms or key words. The results of the study indicated that, face-to-face tutorials, independent learning, group learning and instructional materials have positive influences on learners' motivation in distance learning. From the results obtained, the researcher recommended amongst other recommendations that both synchronous and asynchronous methods of learning should be adopted in distance learning; independent learning should be giving a proper place in distance education in the University of Buea; the coordinator of distance learning in the University of Buea should ensure that distance education tutors should modify their learning environment from large classes to embrace more group learning approaches; and that the Faculty of Education in the University of Buea should ensure that distance learning continue to employ the use of essential instructional materials for their teaching learning interaction alongside other synchronous and asynchronous learning media.

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**KEYWORDS:** Distance Education, Distance Learning Pedagogy, Learners' Motivation, Face-to-Face Tutorials, Independent Learning, Group Learning and Instructional Materials

## INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions in Cameroon are witnessing a steady development in distance education (DE). Some of these institutions such as the University of Buea which is currently offering distance education have joined other distance learning institutions nation and worldwide in using the distance education pedagogy in the teaching learning process. Currently, distance education is a valued component in the Department of Curriculum Studies

and Teaching, Faculty of Education, University of Buea, and has proven its worth in areas where conventional institutions have difficulties in meeting demands such as the very large systems. Considering the crucial role motivation plays in a distance learning (DL) programme, there is need to examine students' motivation in line with distance learning pedagogy used in the DL programme in the university of Buea. Researchers (Muilenburg & Berge 2005; McCombs &

Vakili, 2005) have identified students' poor motivation as a decisive factor in contributing to the high dropout rates in distance education. This explains the fact that there is need for high level students' motivation so as to enable them undertake challenging activities, to be actively engaged, to enjoy and adopt a deep approach to learning, and to exhibit enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity as stated by Schunk et al., (2008). One factor that might account to such level of students' motivation is pedagogy adopted to facilitate the transaction between the students and the teachers. The focus of this research is to investigate the effects of distance learning pedagogy students' motivation in distance education (DE) in the University of Buea.

### **Background and Problem**

The University of Buea started an undergraduate distance learning programme in the 2007/2008 academic year. The programme in Nursery and Primary Education seeks to upgrade the knowledge and skills of primary school teachers with opportunity to earn a Bachelor degree in Nursery and Primary Education. This programme was initiated following the Ministry of Higher education's adoption of distance education as an alternative mode of delivery in order to overcome challenges such as limited access, insufficient diversity in provision, gender parity, reduced funding, quality assurance and good governance (Alemnge, 2015). These changes arose from increasing pressures to respond to market forces and technological opportunities with limited resources and the ever-changing needs and demands of society. Aware that our primary schools are suffering from an acute shortage of teachers in terms of quantity and quality, and bearing in mind the envisaged new policy in teacher education aimed at training teachers to have a minimum qualification of a Bachelor's degree, the University of Buea, through the Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum Studies and Teaching, conceived this programme to address this gap in Basic Education. In light of the foregoing, the Faculty of Education in 2008, designed and developed a Distance Education programme aimed at upgrading the knowledge and skills of practicing teachers in private and public nursery and primary schools in both the Anglophone and Francophone sub-systems of education in Cameroon. This marked the beginning of distance education in the University of Buea (Alemnge, 2015).

The programme is an eight semester (four years) programme. It is primarily print-based and tutorials are delivered face-to-face in study centres in different regions of the country. This is reinforced by telephone tutorials in between the tutorial sessions

(Alemnge, 2015). However, other instructional methods such as independent learning, group learning, counselling, and instructional materials are used. Greater work is done by students using many other electronic and computer related technology. Tutorial meetings last one week and are held twice each semester. That is, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the semester. Assessment is based on continuous assessment in the form of two take home assignments, counting for thirty per cent of the marks and an end of semester examination which covers the remaining seventy percent of the marks. The programme is funded from government subventions and fees paid by students (Alemnge, 2015). The main objective of the programme as stated by Alemnge (2015), is to offer nursery and primary school teachers the opportunity for academic and professional development that will enable them offer quality education to millions of Cameroonian children.

The provision of distance education services and programmes in our state-owned and privately-owned universities calls for the provision and use of flexible delivery modes of education (the ways learners are taught and assessed). This flexibility is supported by the globalization of education and the use of new and adequate information technology tools. Following the enactment of the higher education law on distance education (Law No. 005 of 6<sup>th</sup> April 2001), the University of Buea alongside other universities began seeking ways to provide distance education to the public using a variety of distance learning modes of delivery. As a result of this, pedagogic approaches such as tutorials, independent learning, group learning, counselling, and the use of special instructional materials have been adopted as modes of delivery in the undergraduate distance education programme of the University of Buea. Learners' motivation is one of the factors that have been identified as crucial to the success of any distance learning programme, just as it is key in learning and achievement in face-to-face educational context.

However, the distance learning setting in the University of Buea has presented varying and unique challenges to learners' motivation such as limited social interaction, reduced accountability, and potential feeling of isolation. Poor learners' motivation has been identified as a decisive factor which contributes to low enrolment and some students dropping out of the distance learning programme in the University of Buea. The level of learners' motivation is insufficient to influence what they learn, how they learn, and when they choose to learn. Learners are not willing to take challenging

activities, to be creatively engaged, to enjoy and adopt a deep learning approach, and to exhibit enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity. This coupled with an increasing diverse and inclusive student population from all over the country in the programme has caused the study to question the previously held underlying assumptions by some authors like Garrison (1997), who views distance learners as independent, self-directed and intrinsically motivated learners. Looking at this, it is important to find out and improve those things that influence learners' motivation in distance learning in the University of Buea.

### General Objective

The main objective of this study is to find out how distance learning pedagogy influence learners' motivation in distance education in the University of Buea.

### Specific Objectives

The following specific objectives have been coined for the study and include to:

1. Explore how face-to-face tutorials influence learners' motivation in distance learning.
2. Find out how independent learning influence learners' motivation in distance learning.
3. Examine how group learning influence learners' motivation in distance learning.
4. Examine how instructional materials influence learners' motivation in distance learning.

### General Research Question

How does distance learning pedagogy influence learners' motivation in distance learning?

### Specific Research Question

The following specific research questions guide this study:

1. In what ways do face-to-face tutorials influence learners' motivation in distance learning?
2. How does independent learning influence learners' motivation in distance learning?
3. In what ways does group learning influence learners' motivation in distance learning?
4. How do instructional materials influence learners' motivation in distance learning?

### Concepts and Theories

#### Distance Education

Distance education according to UNESCO (2000) refers to any educational process in which all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner, with the effect that all or most of the communication between teachers and learners is through an artificial medium, either electronic or print. By implication, in distance education, the normal or principal means of

communication is through technology. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) (1999), argued that, there are many approaches to defining the term. Most definitions however, pay attention to the following characteristics (COL, 1999; Keegan, 1986):

1. Separation of teacher and learner in time or place or in both time and place;
2. Institutional accreditation; that is, learning is accredited or certified by some institution or agency. This type of learning is distinct from learning through your own effort without the official recognition of a learning institution;
3. Use of mixed-media courseware, including print, radio, and television broadcasts, video and audio cassettes, computer-based learning, and telecommunications. Courseware tends to be pre-tested and validated before use;
4. Two-way communication allows learners and tutors to interact as distinguished from the passive receipt of broadcast signals. Communication can be synchronous or asynchronous;
5. Possibility of face-to-face meetings for tutorials, learner-learner interaction, library study, and laboratory or practice sessions; and
6. Use of industrialized processes; that is, in large-scale open and distance learning operations, labour is divided and tasks are assigned to various staff who works together in course development teams.

The essence of distance education is the independence of the student. The independence can be enhanced by different aspects which according to Permalla, et. al., (2011), ranging from its technologies, methods, and pedagogy to perceptions, opinions and attitudes of students and academicians toward distance learning. The key to the successful enactment of interaction in distance education, "rests on the philosophy of distance education which informs the decisions about techniques and technology" (Evans & Nation, 1989, p.154) and not only on the way the course is presented and delivered. This makes the nature of distance education to compel providers to use mediated forms of interaction to support their students. This enables students to communicate with their lecturers and talk with each other in an effort to understand the course content.

#### Distance Learning Pedagogy

The philosophy of distance learning pedagogy is assimilated from the characteristics of three distinct areas: adult learning (andragogy), self-determined learning (heutagogy), and methodologies of teaching (pedagogy). This generates three basic forms of academic learning: "self-learning, tele-learning and social intercourse" as stated by Peters (2000, p. 15).

This advocacy is in the line of communications technology and lifelong learning where demands will precipitate a “transformation of the traditional Higher education institutions into an institution of self-study and distance teaching” (Peters, 2000, p. 20). From the above philosophical thinking, the distance learning programme in the University of Buea, just like any other distance learning programme, conceived its distance learning pedagogy to include tutorials, independent learning, group learning and instructional materials (as limited by this study).

### **Independent Learning**

Instead of being constantly ‘spoon fed’ by teachers, telling them exactly what to do, university students especially distance learners are expected to work on their own a lot more, setting their own goals, tracking down resources and taking responsibility for producing the goods on time. This is known as independent learning; a concept that is associated with a number of other educational concepts and wider policy agenda of contemporary relevance such as personalisation, student-centred learning, ownership of learning, self-regulated learning, autonomous learning, self-directed learning, student-initiated learning, project orientation, discovery and inquiry, teaching for thinking, learning to learn, self-instruction and life-long learning’ (Kesten, 1987, p. 9). Independent learning has been seen as vital to the continuing development of a system of school education that promotes high quality and lifelong learning, social equity and cohesion (DfES, 2006). In this connection, independent learning can be defined as learning which students have an understanding of their learning; being motivated to take responsibility for their learning; and working with teachers to structure their learning environment (Candy, 1991; Gorman, 1998; Bates & Wilson, 2002). Independent learning does not involve students merely working alone. Instead, the important role teachers can play in enabling and supporting independent learning is stressed (Alexander, et. al., 1992). It encourages collaboration, self-motivated inquiry, problem-solving, interpersonal skills, industrious activity, creativity, and being reflective. The independent learner is active in directing and regulating his or her own learning and is him/herself a learning expert.

### **Face-to-face Tutorials**

Nowadays, learning is conceived as a cognitive, constructive, meaningful, mediated and self-regulated process rather than as an impersonal process of memorization and acquisition of factual knowledge (Ferreira, 2013). This means that teaching especially in distance learning must reach beyond traditional lecturing and assessment of written assignments to

become a question-raising activity and an awareness-raising enterprise involving the organization and the monitoring of learning. In the same token, Santos (2004) stated that teachers must act beyond their role as knowledge transmitters and evaluators to become facilitators, monitors and, to some extent, role models to students in order to help them develop as critical, creative subjects, able to build their intellectual autonomy. These are all attributes of tutorials which according to Kuang-Yun (2013, p. 150), means ‘‘teachers working with individual students to support their learning’’. In tutoring teaching, a tutor guides an individual or a small group of students. In the meantime, students expect that, such tutorials can help them make better sense of the subject matter and promote their essential academic skills (Ashwin, 2005). Face-to-face tutorial teaching is ideally conducted in small groups and has the advantage of being interactive between students and tutor (Kester, 2010). It is an ideal method of teaching when students already have a significant amount of knowledge. It holds that students should be notified of the topic of the tutorial beforehand to allow preparation, so that they are ready to discuss and gain from the session. In face-to-face tutorials, everybody is encouraged to participate. This sometimes requires the tutor to suppress those who always want to talk, and encourage those who tend to remain silent as stated by Kester (2010).

### **Group Learning**

Group learning in distance education stems from a reaction to the changes of the society in this era of democracy, including a new emphasis on team work in the work sector (Millis & Cottell, 1998). This is coupled with a realization that, in a rapidly changing information society, communication skills are increasingly important. Group learning is a well-organized pedagogical practice that promotes learning, higher level thinking, pro-social behaviour and a greater understanding of students with diverse learning, social and adjustment needs. Cohen (1994), suggested that, there is no other pedagogical practice that simultaneously achieves such diverse outcomes. In group learning, there are some need-based learning activities like peer tutoring which is usually adopted to “enhance students’ learning” (Ali, et. al., 2015, p. 64). Group learning methods in distance learning can be divided into two basic groups: synchronous and asynchronous learning. The term synchronous learning is a mode of delivery where all participants are present at the same time (Pol-Lim, 2017). It resembles traditional classroom teaching methods despite the participants being located remotely and requires a timetable to be organized. The asynchronous learning mode of delivery is where

participants access course materials on their own schedule and so is more flexible. Students are not required to be together at the same time. The two methods can be combined in order to deliver one course (Pol-Lim, 2017).

### **Instructional (Learning) Materials**

Teaching at any level requires that, students be exposed to some form of simulation. Instructional materials, also known as teaching and learning materials is defined as objects or devices that help the teacher to make learning meaningful to the learners (Ikerionwu, 2000). In the same vein, Agina-obu (2005) defined instructional materials as concrete or physical objects which provide sound, visual or both to the sense organs during teaching. According to Wales (1975), the use of instructional materials in distance learning will make discovered facts glued firmly to the memory of students. This implies that instructional materials are essential and significant tools needed for teaching and learning in distance education to promote teachers' efficiency and improve students' performance. According to the Commonwealth of Learning (2003), Distance learning materials are always different from traditional textbooks. In most distance learning programmes, the four things that will be most noticeable in the learning materials are: The wide range of learning devices, the relatively low proportion of text compared to learning devices; the space that is often provided for learners to write their answers in, and the 'generous' layout overall (Commonwealth of Learning, 2003).

Instructional materials used in the distance learning programme of the University of Buea are basically print (reading) materials commonly called Self Learning Materials (SLM) (Alemnge, 2015). The major Characteristics of these Self Learning Materials include: developing a self-learning unit, pedagogic introduction and behavioural objectives, content analysis and concept mapping, building pedagogic interaction (learner activities and access devices).

### **Motivation**

Motivation refers to "the reasons underlying behaviour" (Guay, et. al., 2010, p. 712). It is the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something. Motivation involves goals that provide the impetus for purposeful action with an intended direction. Contemporary views link motivation to individuals' cognitive and affective processes such as thoughts, beliefs, goals and emotions and emphasise the situated, interactive relationship between the learner and the learning environment that is facilitated or constrained by various social and contextual factors (Schunk, et. al., 2014). While thinking about

motivation we often try to locate its source whether it is internal to the person or external to him/her. This brings us to the two types of motivation - intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Undertaking a given task may be motivated by promise of a prize or some other kind of gain which is external to the task. Thus, the task is instrumental in receiving or gaining access to the external reward. In all such situations the locus of control is external to the person who is asked to undertake the activity. Such situations characterize the kind of motivation which is extrinsic. On the other hand, we have situations in which the source of motivation lies inside the task. In such cases we work because the task itself is interesting and does not require any external source of motivation. Here, the task is not instrumental in obtaining any external reward. The locus of control is inside the person. Person's involvement in the task is spontaneous and the task itself acts as its own reward. This situation represents intrinsic motivation such as reading an interesting novel, writing a poem or a story. Thus, intrinsic motivation is motivation that is animated by personal enjoyment, interest, or pleasure. In this study, motivation will be limited to intrinsic motivation and include those internal elements that motivated and continue to motivate distance learners to undertake distance learning. These include the desire for professional development, self or personal development, interest and the desire for life-long learning.

Wedemeyer's (1977), theory of Independence and Autonomy, highlights the core or essence of distance education as the independence of the student. This was reflected in his preference for the term independent study for distance education at the college or university level. He suggested six characteristics of independent study systems which include: The student and teacher are separated; The normal processes of teaching and learning are carried out in writing or through some other medium; Teaching is individualized; Learning takes place through the student's activity; Learning is made convenient for the student in his or her own environment; and the learner takes responsibility for the pace of his or her own progress, with freedom to start and stop at any time. Wedemeyer (1977), noted four elements of every teaching-learning situation: a teacher, a learner or learners, a communication system or mode, and something to be taught or learned (curriculum). Key to the success of distance education according Wedemeyer (1977), was the development of the relationship between student and teacher. The distance learning programme in the University of Buea can be said to be built on this theory as it lays much emphasis on independent

learning and the use of print technology, placing greater responsibility for learning on the learner.

Holmberg's Theory of Interaction and Communication (1995), what he calls "Guided Didactic Conversation", falls into the general category of communication theory as stated by Schlosser & Simonson (2009, p.43). In his theory, Holmberg stated that guided didactic conversation distance teaching will support student motivation, promote learning pleasure, and make the study relevant to the individual learner and his/her needs, creating feelings of rapport between the learner and the distance-education institution (its tutors, counsellors, etc.), facilitating access to course

content, engaging the learner in activities, discussions, and decisions, and generally promoting helpful real and simulated communication to and from the learner. His assumptions form the bases for teaching in distance learning like that of the University of Buea. A considerable portion of all oral tuition can rightly be described as guided conversation. The synchronous and asynchronous communication in the teaching learning situation in distance learning in the University of Buea can rightly be described as guided didactics.

eristics needed for a successful distance learning which Knowles' andragogy suggests.

### Methodology

This study employed the case study survey research design with the case of the University of Buea, particularly the distance learning programme in the Department of Curriculum Study and Teaching, Faculty of Education. The target population of this study was 128 students who consisted of 118 current distance students and 10 former distance learners who had graduated from the programme and were offering masters programmes at the Faculty of Education. The target, accessible and sampled population of the study is shown on table 1 below.

**Table 1: Target, Accessible and Sampled Population of the Study**

Level	Target Population	Accessible Population	Sampled Population
Level 200	29	12	02
Level 300	22	14	03
Level 400	32	16	02
Level 500	35	15	03
Former students	10	05	05
Total	128	62	15 students

The purposive and the convenient sampling techniques were used in this study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample size for the interview (five participants). The ten participants for the focus group discussion were selected through convenience sampling.

Interview schedule and a focus group discussion schedule were used as instruments for data collection.

To establish validity and reliability of the instruments, the researcher used a system called "trustworthiness" (Cuba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 114). According to Cuba and Lincoln (1994), cited in Kumar (2011), trustworthiness in a qualitative study is determined by four indicators namely: credibility, transferability, dependence, and conformability and these four indicators reflect the validity and reliability in qualitative research.

Data collected from the field were analysed using the process of thematic analysis whereby concepts or ideas were grouped under umbrella terms or key words. The analysis was done by the researcher with the guide of the statistician. The stages involved in data analysis included transcription, organization, familiarization, coding, for formatting themes

### Findings of the Study

#### Demographic Data

The demographic data of this study have been presented on Table 2 as shown below:

**Table 2: Demographic Data of the Study**

Interview	Focus Group Discussion
Male = 2 (40%)	Male = 5 (50%)
Female = 3 (60%)	Female = 5 (50%)
Total = 5 (100%)	Total = 10 (100%)

**Results of the Study****Research Question One: In What Ways does Face-to-Face Tutorials Influence Learners' Motivation in Distance Learning?**

Data from research question one was gotten with the use of interview schedule and focus group discussion and presented as follows:

**Table 3: Summary Results on Effects of Face-To-Face Tutorial on Learners' Motivation in Distance Learning (From Interview and Focus Group Discussion)**

Items	Groundings	Respondents' Responses
How is face-to-face tutorial in distance education organized?	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Face-to-face tutorial in distance education is organized in two semesters (first and second semesters).</li> <li>- The first semester starts in December and ends in April while the second semester starts in April and end in August</li> <li>- Within the two semesters, tutorials hold three times (sessions) a year. The first session in December, the second in April and the third in August.</li> <li>- Tutors come to class and teach and there is face-to-face interaction between the students and tutors for four hours per course. Students are given printed course materials for each course.</li> <li>- During the first tutorial session that holds in December, tutors give take-home assignments to students. The assignments are submitted to the centre managers following the deadline given.</li> <li>- During the second tutorials session that holds in April, students write the first semester's exams after tutorials. Then, tutorials for the second semester begin, after which students are given take-home assignments.</li> <li>- During the third tutorial session in August, students are given the last tutorials for the second semester, after which there write the exams for the second semester.</li> <li>- Tutorials and examinations for the second session in April holds in study centres across the country (Buea, Bamenda, Kumba and Yaoundé) while the first and the last sessions takes place in the University of Buea campus</li> </ul>
In your opinion, do you think that face-to-face tutorials can motivate distance learners to learn? If yes, why? If no, why?	15	<p>Yes: This is because face-to-face tutorials are done chronologically following the course materials, and this instils consciousness in the students, provides room for interaction with peers and tutors, matches learners' work schedule, enhances understanding, enhances career and personal development, is learners-centred, provides for role modelling and improves learners' retention</p> <p>No: This is because in some cases, lectures are not done chronologically following the course manual. Lecturers rush through the units without making sure learners have understood the concepts. Lectures are sometimes teacher centred, done within a short time and there is not enough room for discussions.</p>
Can you please explain how the different tutorial activities (pedagogic, social, and managerial) can influence learners' motivation to pursue distance learning?	15	<p>Pedagogic Activities: Pedagogic activities enhances learning, motivation, facilitate teaching and learning, and ensures classroom management</p> <p>Social Activities: Social activities enhance students' motivation, learning, effective coordination and advertises the programme.</p> <p>Managerial Activities: Learners learn how to manage themselves, their temperaments, time and value everyone's opinion during discussions, hence, enhance students' motivation and effective programming of activities.</p>

Please make suggestions for improvement.	15	More time should be put in for face-to-face tutorials, tutorials should be chronological, there should be increase assiduity of tutors, use of blended learning, provision of post graduate programme, creation of more study centres for face-to-face tutorials, recruitments of more tutors in to the programme, and provision of maximum security for student during tutorials.
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Table 3 shows results in response to research question one on the effects of face-to-face tutorials on learners' motivation in distance learning, obtained using both interview schedule and focus group discussion schedule and analysed thematically.

In response to how face-to-face tutorial in distance education is organized, all the fifteen respondents said that, there are two semesters in a year (first and second semester). The first semester starts in December and ends in April while the second semester starts in April and end in August. Within these two semesters, there are three tutorial sessions where learners come for face-to-face tutorials with their tutors. The first tutorial session holds in December, the second in April and the third in August. Tutorials take place in the form of lectures and tutors come to class and teach. In each tutorial session, learners sit in class just for a few days and have lectures with their tutors. Each course has four hours of tutorials which is done unit by unit following the course manual. Tutorials are also characterized by discussions, questioning and working in groups. Each tutorial session ends with take-home assignments for learners and each semester ends with a written exam.

In response to students' opinion on whether face-to-face tutorials can motivate distance learners to learn, thirteen respondents answered yes, with reasons advanced such as: face-to-face tutorials are done chronologically, following the course materials which students take back home and read for better understanding. This instills consciousness in the students, provides rooms for interaction with peers and tutors, matches learners' work schedule, enhances understanding, enhances career and personal development, and is learners-centred. Two respondents' responses were no, with opinions such as, lectures are not done chronologically and lecturers rush through the units without making sure learners have understood, leaving no room for enough discussions.

In response to how the different tutorial activities (pedagogic, social, and managerial) can influence learners' motivation to pursue distance learning, all fifteen respondents mentioned that pedagogic activities are motivating, facilitate teaching and learning, enhances interaction and ensures classroom management. Social activities make learning more meaningful, hence, enhance students' motivation, learning, effective coordination and advertises the programme while managerial activities enable learners to be able to manage themselves, their time and to value everyone's opinion during discussions thereby enhancing students' motivation and effective programming of activities.

Lastly, some suggestions for improvement were equally made by all fifteen respondents such as: more time should be put in for face-to-face tutorials, tutorials should be chronological and lecturers should take time to present their lessons and not rush through it. There should be increase assiduity of tutors, the use of blended learning in distance education, creation of more study centres for face-to-face tutorials, recruitments of more tutors in the programme, and provision of maximum security for student during tutorials.

### **Research Question Two: How Does Independent Learning Influence Learners' Motivation in Distance learning?**

Results from research question two were gotten from both interview schedule and focus group discussion and presented as follows:

**Table 4: Summary Results on the Influence of Independent Learning on Learners' Motivation in Distance Education (From Interview and Focus Group Discussion)**

Items	Groundings	Respondents' Responses
How is independent learning in distance education organized?	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learners buy their course materials (course manual) for each course.</li> <li>- They are given take-home assignments in each course for them to do independently while at home. They are also expected to study their course manual and other books, do research and answer the assignments given, then submit to the centre managers who then distribute to tutors.</li> </ul>



<p>What is your take about distance education in the University of Buea using independent learning as a teaching learning method?</p>	15	<p>- Learners call the tutors when they have difficulties. They also work with other students, resource persons in the community.</p> <p>On the one hand, independent learning is good because it gives room for more research, suits learners with working experience, matches learners' work schedule, develops creativity in learners, develops self-reliance, widens the scope of the teachers and make them gain many learning skills like computer and self-management skills.</p> <p>On the other hand, independent learning is not the best because it is expensive as learners have to buy all course materials and hand-outs, and there is inadequate lecture time.</p>
<p>Do you think that using independent learning influences students' motivation to learn in this programme? If yes, how? If no, why?</p>	15	<p>Yes: This is because independent learning encourages research, provides greater learning time, it is self-oriented, promotes greater reading ability in students, enhances computer skills, enhances creative thinking, promote hard work, it is flexible, encourages problems solving, promotes inferential thinking in learners, keeps the learners busy and alert about their studies.</p>
<p>Please make suggestions for improvement.</p>	15	<p>No: This is because learners incur greater expenditure and it discourages group work or cooperative learning thus limited interaction. There is inadequate explanation of concepts as solitary learning is practiced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many tutors marked assignments should be provided to assist learning learn independently,</li> <li>- Distance education should adopt a blended learning model where online as well as face-to-face tutorials are used in teaching and learning,</li> <li>- The cost of course materials should be reduced,</li> <li>- Group work and collaboration should be encouraged,</li> <li>- There should be online submission of assignments,</li> </ul>

Table 4 shows results in response to research question two on the influence of independent learning on learners' motivation in distance learning, obtained using both interview and focus group discussion schedule and analysed thematically.

In response to how independent learning in distance education is organized, all the fifteen respondents said that learners are provided with course materials for each course, then, they are given take-home assignments in each of the courses for them to do independently while at home. The rest of the learning is done independently by the learners and at their own time.

In response to learners' perception about distance education in the University of Buea using independent learning as a teaching learning method, both positive and negative responses were gotten from all the fifteen respondents. On the positive note, respondents said that, independent learning gives room for more research as it suits the learners' characteristics and work schedule. It also widens the reasoning scope of the students and makes them gain learning skills like computer and self-management skills. On the negative note, respondents said that, independent learning is expensive and incur a lot of cost on the learners.

In addition, learners' perceptions on the influence of independent learning on students' motivation to learn in this programme were equally positive and negative. The fact that independent learning provides greater learning time, is self-oriented, promotes greater reading ability in students, enhances computer skills in student, enhances creative thinking, promote hard work and flexibility, encourages research, enhances problem solving ability, thus motivating students to learn and keeping them busy and alert about their studies are some of the positive influences mentioned by all the fifteen respondents. The negative effects as some respondent said included the fact that learners incur greater expenditure and group work or cooperative learning is discouraged.

Lastly, some suggestions for improvement were made by all the fifteen respondents such as: many tutors marked assignments should be provided to assist learning learn independently, reduction of the cost of course materials, online submission of assignments and developing a blended learning model for distance education.

### Research Question Three: In What Ways Does Group Learning Influence Learners' Motivation in Distance Learning?

Results from research question three on the influence of group learning on learners' motivation were gotten from both interview schedule and focus group discussion and presented as follows:

**Table 5: Summary Results on the Influence of Group Learning on Learners' Motivation in Distance Learning (From Interview and Focus Group Discussion)**

Items	Groundings	Respondents' Responses
How is group learning in distance education organized?	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students create learning groups by themselves bases on personal friendship and area of resident</li> <li>- They share learning tasks among themselves where they prepare and discuss in their groups.</li> <li>- Students share learning experiences during group learning.</li> <li>- There is peer tutoring, discussion and reading.</li> <li>- They create WhatsApp groups where they discuss issues related to their learning.</li> <li>- Students discuss assignments in groups but develop them individually.</li> <li>- In some cases, the tutor share learners into groups and give them tasks which they present to the entire class.</li> </ul>
Group learning has a number of activities which learners carry out; one of which is peer tutoring. Do you think that these activities can affect learners' motivation to learn? If yes, why? If no, why?	15	Yes: This is because during group learning, learners share their opinions with meaningful justifications, there is effective time managed, there is confidentiality, catch-up of tutorials, and personal reading. Group learning also enhances creativity and problem solving, effective communication, promotes friendship, collaboration, and harmonization of ideas. With group learning activities, there is deep learning as learners discuss the content in details
In your opinion, how does group learning encourage learners' motivation to learn in distance education?	15	Group learning enhances understanding of concepts, collaboration, deep learning, research, improves learners' self-esteem, and inspires slow learners to learn.
Please make suggestions for improvement.	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group learning and all its activities should be encouraged in distance education in the University of Buea.</li> <li>- Every student should endeavor to work with a group.</li> <li>- Group learning should be encouraged and tutors should be appointed to coordinate learning groups.</li> </ul>

Table 5 presents results in response to research question three on the influence of group learning on learners' motivation in distance learning, obtained using interview and focus group discussion schedule and analysed thematically.

In response to how group learning in distance education is organized, all the fifteen respondents said that, students organize themselves in learning groups where they meet and study together based on their personal interest, friendship and area of resident. They also create whatsapp groups where they discuss issues related to their group learning.

In response to how group learning activities can affect learners' motivation to learn, the fifteen respondents said that, these activities encourage effective understanding of concepts, learning through collaboration and harmonization of ideas. They equally said that, group learning activities enhance deep learning, research, improved self-esteem and effective time management

In response to how group learning encourages learners' motivation to learn in distance education, the fifteen respondents said that, group learning makes learning more collaborative, thereby inspiring slow learners to learn. In addition, group learning makes learners more conscious about their studies and ease understanding.

In addition, the all the respondents suggested that group learning should be encouraged, all learners should endeavour to belong to a learning group and tutors should be appointed to coordinate learning groups.

#### **Research Question Four: How do Instructional Materials Influence Learners' Motivation in Distance Learning?**

Results from research question four were gotten from both interview schedule and focus group discussion and presented as follows:

**Table 6: Results on the Influence of Instructional Materials on Learners' Motivation in Distance Learning (From Focus Group Discussion)**

Items	Groundings	Respondents' Responses
What are the different instructional materials used in distance learning and the effects it has on the teaching leaning interaction?	15	<p>The different instructional materials used in distance education include:</p> <p><b>Print Materials</b> Print materials such as textbooks, workbooks, course outlines, and course manuals has the following effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Enhances students' academic performances,</li> <li>-Enhances effective teaching, learning and research.</li> <li>-It guides teaching and learning in the sense that it is the working document for learners and learners read it to prepare for their examinations.</li> <li>-It provides enough materials for students to do their assignments and to prepare for their examinations and do further study.</li> </ul> <p><b>Projected Materials</b> Projected materials such as projectors and computers has the following effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Improve learning, ease teaching, and facilitates the use of other course materials.</li> <li>-It helps learners to do more research and to type assignments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Non-Projected Materials</b> Non-projected materials like chalkboard make teaching easy.</p> <p><b>Telephones:</b> It helps in research, recording audios and videos and communication in whatsapp groups.</p> <p><b>Specialized Rooms:</b> Specialized rooms like library enhances research</p> <p><b>Online Facilities:</b> Online facilities like internet and e-mails makes teaching and learning easy.</p>

How are instructional materials used in distance learning organized?	15	The instructional materials are organized in units. Each unit covers a topic and has well set objectives, the introduction to that topic, well analysed content and tutors marked assignments, provided for students use. The names or the unit writers are equally provided with references for further research.
Can you please explain how using these instructional materials can motivate students to learn?	15	Instructional materials serve as a guide for teaching and learning, facilitates research, ease understanding and recall or remembrance, it is reliable especially when it comes to preparing examinations, enhances independent and group learning.
Please make suggestions for improvement.	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The course materials should be made more explicit.</li> <li>- The language should be made simple to the understanding of the learners.</li> <li>- It should equally be revised or updated.</li> <li>- The conditions for payment of course materials should be improved</li> <li>- The quality of course materials should be improved</li> <li>- More revision questions should be included in the course materials, and</li> <li>- The prices of cost materials should be reduced.</li> </ul>

Table 6 shows results in response to research question four, on the influence of instructional materials on learners' motivation in distance learning, obtained using both interview and focus group discussion schedule and analysed thematically.

In response to the different instructional materials used in distance learning and the effects it has on the teaching-learning interaction, all the fifteen-respondent said that distance education uses instructional materials such as: print materials (textbooks, workbooks, course outlines, and course manuals), projected materials (projectors and computers), non-projected materials (like chalkboard), specialized rooms (like library), online facilities like internet and e-mails and telephone. These materials guides teaching and learning, help students to do their assignments and research, enhances students' academic performances, enhances effective teaching, ease teaching, and facilitates the use of other course materials.

In response to the way instructional materials are organized, all the fifteen respondents said that course materials are organized according to units. Each unit have well set objectives, an introduction, well analyzed content and activities or tutors marked assignments provided for students use at the end of the unit. The names or the unit writers are equally provided with references for further research.

In response to how these instructional materials influence learners' motivation in distance learning, all the fifteen respondents equally said that instructional materials influence students' motivation as it serves as a guide for teaching and learning, facilitates research, ease understanding of materials, enhance remembrance, are reliable especially when it comes to preparing examinations, enhances independent and group learning, and provides contents for students to prepare their examinations.

Finally, some suggestions for improvement were made by all the fifteen respondents such as course materials should be updated or revised, the quality of course materials should be improved, more revision questions should be included in the course materials, the prices of cost materials should be reduced, the course materials should be made more explicit; the language should be made simple to the understanding of the learners.

### Summary of Results

Results presented in this chapter have been summarized on table 7 below as follows:

**Table 7: Summary Results of the Study**

Research Questions	Summary Results	
	Pedagogic Processes	Effects on Learners' Motivation
<b>Research Question 1</b> In what ways do face-to-face tutorials influence learners' motivation in distance learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tutorials hold three times in a year and in two semesters.</li> <li>- Tutors come to class and teach</li> <li>- There is face-to-face interaction between students and tutors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Instill consciousness</li> <li>- Interactive learning</li> <li>- Matches learners' work</li> <li>- Enhance understanding</li> <li>- Enhance personal and career development</li> <li>- Learner-centred</li> <li>- Provides for role modeling</li> <li>- Improves retention</li> <li>- Enhance participatory learning</li> <li>- Provide counseling for learners</li> </ul>
<b>Research Question 2</b> How does independent learning influence learners' motivation in distance learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provision of course materials</li> <li>- Provision of assignments</li> <li>- Personal research and learning</li> <li>- Telephone calls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides greater learning time</li> <li>- Self-oriented learning</li> <li>- Enhance computer skills</li> <li>- Enhances creative thinking</li> <li>- Enhance research</li> <li>- Limited control</li> <li>- Effective time management</li> </ul>
<b>Research Question 3</b> In what ways does group learning influence learners' motivation in distance learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group formation</li> <li>- Shared experiences</li> <li>- Peer tutoring</li> <li>- Formation of WhatsApp groups</li> <li>- Personal development of work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased explanations</li> <li>- Active participation of members</li> <li>- Enhance confidentiality</li> <li>- Enhances catch up</li> <li>- Enhances creativity and problem solving</li> <li>- Enhance effective communication</li> <li>- Promote friendship</li> <li>- Enhance understanding</li> <li>- Build self-esteem</li> <li>- Encourage research</li> </ul>
<b>Research Question 4</b> How do instructional materials influence learners' motivation in distance learning?	Course materials are organized in units with each unit having the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Well set objectives</li> <li>- Well analyzed content</li> <li>- Tutor marked assignments for revision</li> </ul> References for further research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve academic achievement</li> <li>- Enhance effective teaching and learning</li> <li>- Provide learning content for examinations</li> <li>- Makes learning interesting</li> <li>- Enhance remembrance</li> </ul> Enhance independent learning

### Discussion of Results

In relation to research question one on the influence of face-to-face tutorials on learners' motivation in distance learning, the major results gotten from the field show that face-to-face tutorials in distance education is organized in two semester (with three tutorial sessions) a year and this influence learners' motivation as it instils consciousness in the learners, ensures interactive learning, matches learners work, enhance understanding, enhance personal and career development, is learner-centred, provides for role modelling, improves retention, enhance participatory learning, and provide counselling for learners as

shown by the results. Looking at the results gotten from research question one, it shows that the distance learning programme in the University of Buea still ties to the manual or conventional face-to-face method of teaching and learning. According to Holmberg (2005), distance learning, supported by face-to-face elements implies a risk that students may be over-taught. At the same time, teaching and learning fully online may be detrimental to students who are in rural locations where information and communication technologies are limited and sometimes do not exist. Therefore, it is important for

the distance learning programme in the University of Buea to adopt the blended approach of teaching and learning which utilizes both synchronous and asynchronous methods of teaching and learning. In line with this, the face-to-face tutorials should be blended with online learning processes so as to satisfy every learner. The blended approach according to Holmberg, (2005) can provide interactive, individual, flexible, and participative technology-based learning where students construct knowledge through intellectual engagement at their own pace. If adopted, the blended learning framework should refer to a blend of learning theory, teaching practice, student-centred learning, and the use of new technologies in order to provide students with rich, meaningful learning experiences that extend beyond the lecture room or discussion class.

Results from research question two on the influence of independent learning on learners' motivation reviews that, independent learning in distance education in the University of Buea is solely the responsibility of the learners as they are provided the course materials to study, assignments to do at home and equally expected to do personal research and make telephone calls when necessary. This influence learners' motivation as it provides greater learning time for students, enhances self-oriented learning, computer skills, creative thinking, research, and exhibit limited control over the learners. Looking at the results presented, it is evident that independent learning also known as self-directed learning has been identified as an important form of adult learning that can provide insights into the very process of learning itself as supported by Caffarella (1993). But self-directed learning does not necessarily mean solitary learning or learning in isolation. Rather, the adults in this type of learning seeks assistance in the form of human and material resources from friends, colleagues, experts in the content areas, books, magazines, journals and audio-visual materials. Considering the nature of distance learning offered in the university of Buea, participation is a necessary feature when self-directed or independent learning is practiced. This kind of learning mode has also contributed to the identification and characteristics of adult learners. The central assumption is that learning in adulthood means growth in self-direction and autonomy (Knowles, 1970).

Results from research question three on the influence of group learning on learners' motivation show that, group learning in distance education is organized by both the tutors and the students and this influences learners' motivation to learn as it enables them to share learning experiences together, do peer tutoring,

take active part in the teaching learning process, develop confidentiality, creativity and problem solving skills, enhance effective communication, promote friendship, enhance understanding, build self-esteem and encourage research. Looking at the results, it is evident that, group learning has significant effects on learners' motivation in distance learning. One of the important aspects of adult education is motivation. Lieb (1991), cited six factors that serve as sources of motivation for adult learning; one of which is social relationships (to make new friends and to meet a need for associations and friendships). This continues to show the importance of group learning in a distance education programme like that of the University of Buea if learners' motivation is to be considered. In support of this, there is need for an expansion of communication technologies so as to respond to students immediately and to develop student association. Facebook, Whatapp, webcam, video conference (VC), and student seminars are important to send both formal and informal information so that students become an active part of the programme. Students need to be fully conversant with these technologies and assessment methodologies need to be evaluated to suit group learning procedures. This therefore, calls for increase synchronous and asynchronous means of communication in group learning.

Results from research question four on the influence of instructional materials on learners' motivation in distance learning shows that, distance learning in the University of Buea, being essentially print-based, uses print instructional materials which has been designed and developed for all the courses. These instructional materials are said to influence learners' motivation in distance learning in that it improves learners' academic achievement, enhance effective teaching and learning, provide learning content for examinations, makes learning interesting, enhance remembrance and independent learning. Looking at the results presented, it is clear that text or print materials are still the dominant form of information in the distance learning programmes in the University of Buea. This may be due to inadequate technologies and/or infrastructure. Therefore, print-based instruction materials will continue to play a critical role in distance learners' motivation in this programme as supported by Burns (2011), who stated that, print materials offer compelling strengths as a distance education medium as both its production and distribution costs are low relative to other forms of distance education. There exist other advantages offered by print-based materials such as; it is easy to reproduce, portable, ideal for self-study, and a familiar medium to teachers (Burns, 2011). However,

limiting the distance learning programme in the University of Buea basically to print-based distance learning will eventually give rise to many challenges which are often associated with print or text-based instruction, thus, will weakens its efficacy.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the results and discussion of this study, the following conclusions can therefore be made in line with the research questions formulated for this study.

The distance learning programme in the University of Buea is still basically face-to-face though little interaction is done through e-mails and telephone calls. The traditional chalk and talk method of face-to-face tutorials used in this programme though motivating to learners, is proven not to enthuse learners, compared to synchronous and asynchronous methods of teaching and learning which have proven to be more interesting. Therefore, there is need to plan and coordinate the distance learning programme in the University of Buea to adopt and utilized synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning methods.

Independent learning is indispensable as far as distance learning is concerned. With the advent of modern-day technology, every learner can get first-hand information or knowledge in any learning endeavour thus learning independently becomes easy for most modern-day learners. Independent learning has significant contributions to learners' motivation in distance education especially when most of the learners are adults and have a working experience that can help them in their learning endeavours. Therefore, independent learning should be encouraged in distance learning in the University of Buea and if possible, other universities that offer distance learning.

Distance learning in the University of Buea is not a marginal educational activity, but rather a viable and cost-effective system of providing better individualized instruction and group learning is one of the best strategies for provided such instructions. Thus, for this programme to continue to flourish, utilizing both synchronous and asynchronous communication in group learning must be continued.

The distance learning programme in the University of Buea uses basically print materials for instruction with very little teaching learning interaction done through e-mails, WhatsApp and telephone calls. Learning materials are not displaced in any online learning platform. Many universities across the world have used other online instructional systems of learning and have succeeded. The University of Buea should not be an exception. Therefore, appropriate

media should be chosen for teaching and dissemination of instructional material to the learners such as print media (textbooks, study guides, study aids, and newspapers), audio media (audio-books, audio-cards, records, audio-cassettes and reel-to-reel audiotapes, audio compact-discs (CDs), telephones, cell phones, audio-texts, radios), and video media (Televisions, satellites, direct broadcast satellites, cable televisions, closed-circuit televisions, asynchronous and synchronous Podcasts and vodcasts, teleconferencing, microwaves, interactive Videos, videotext, computer internets, weblogs (blogs), electronic mails, chat rooms, and multimedia).

### **Recommendations**

The study therefore recommends that coordinator alongside other faculty administrators in the University of Buea should continuously strive to implement teaching learning methods that will sustain learners' interest and make the teaching learning process more productive and interesting. In line with this, both synchronous and asynchronous methods of learning should be adopted. In addition, the coordinator of the programme should make sure academic staff and distance education librarians who perform an indispensable function in the educational process and have much critical roles to play in supporting the distance education system in the new learning environment receives appropriate training and equipment. Lastly, the government should provide subventions to the distance learning programme that can assist in providing enough facilities for both face-to-face and online learning of students.

The faculty should ensure that independent learning should be giving a proper place in distance education in the University of Buea. Also, the programme coordinator should ensure that course writers provide rich and adequate content in the course materials alongside many self-evaluation questions for students to use as a guide when learning independently. The Faculty of Education should institute online platforms where teachers can meet with learners within a schedule time to address areas of difficulties which students encounter while studying independently.

The University of Buea should ensure that distance education tutors should modify their learning environment from large classes to embrace more group learning approaches. The coordinator should equally appoint tutors to lead or monitor learning groups and give them advice where need be. In addition, the coordinator should ensure that the programme should be organized in such a way that

every learner should belong or work with a learning group.

The University of Buea should ensure that distance learning continue to employ the use of essential instructional materials for their teaching learning interaction alongside other synchronous and asynchronous learning media. The coordinator should see in to it that course materials should be frequently updated, the quality improved, and the cost reduced so as to make it more dependable and affordable.

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